



STIPITURUS MALACHURUS: *Leys*

J. & E. Gould, del.

C. Hullmandel, inv.

STIPITURUS MALACHURUS, *Less.*

Emu Wren.

Muscicapa malachura, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., pl. lii.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 407.

Soft-tailed Flycatcher, Linn. Trans., vol. iv. p. 242. pl. 21.—Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 224.

Malurus malachurus, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 224.

Stipiturus malachurus, Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 415.

Soft-tailed Warbler, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. vii. p. 123.

Waw-gul-jelly, Aborigines of New South Wales.

Djur-jeel-ya, Aborigines of the lowlands of Western Australia.

This curious little bird has a wide distribution; since it inhabits the whole of the southern portion of Australia, from Moreton Bay on the east to Swan River on the west, including Tasmania. Among the places where it is most numerous in the latter country, are the swampy grounds in the neighbourhood of Recherche Bay in D'Entrecasteaux Channel, the meadows at New Norfolk, Circular Head, and Flinder's Island in Bass's Straits; on the continent of Australia, Botany Bay, and indeed all portions of the country having a similar character are favoured with its presence.

In its actions it bears a close resemblance to the true *Maluri*, among which it has been associated, but, as the nature of its plumage would lead us to expect, it resorts to situations of a totally different character; for while the more open forest is the favourite resort of the *Maluri*, the Emu Wren is especially fond of low marshy districts, covered with rank high grasses and rushes. It is a recluse little bird, concealing itself from view by keeping near the ground in the midst of the more dense parts of the grass beds, and very seldom showing itself. Its extremely short round wings ill adapt it for flight, and this power is consequently seldom employed, the bird depending for progression upon its extraordinary capacity for running: in fact, when the grasses are wet from dew or rain, its wings are rendered perfectly unavailable. On the ground it is altogether as nimble and active, its creeping mouse-like motions, and the extreme facility with which it turns and bounds over the surface, enabling it easily to elude pursuit, and amply compensating for the paucity of its powers of flight. The tail is carried in an erect position, and is even occasionally retroverted over the back.

The nest, which is a small ball-shaped structure, with rather a large opening on one side, is composed of grasses lined with feathers, and artfully concealed in a tuft of grass or low shrub. One that I found in Recherche Bay contained three newly-hatched young: this being the only nest I ever met with, I am unable to give any description of its eggs, but I am informed they are always three in number.

The male is readily distinguished from the female by the blue colouring of the throat, and by a somewhat greater development of the tail-feathers. The decomposed or loose structure of these feathers, much resembling those of the Emu, has suggested the colonial name of Emu Wren for this species, an appellation singularly appropriate, inasmuch as it at once indicates the kind of plumage with which the bird is clothed, and the Wren-like nature of its habits.

The male has the crown of the head rust-red; upper surface brown, each feather having a black mark down the centre; wing-feathers dark brown, edged with rufous brown; chin and throat pale blue; sides of the neck and all the under surface bright rufous; tail dark brown; irides reddish brown; bill and feet brown.

The female differs from the male only in having the crown of the head striated with blackish brown, and the throat rufous instead of blue.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the natural size.